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The Maryland Yellowthroat

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MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

WHERE BIRDS LIVE
A Classic Publication **Goes Digital**
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The Maryland Yellowthroat

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Editor's Note

Well, 2020 has certainly turned out to be no fun. Like many of you, I had trips planned for the year which, due to the coronavirus, have been canceled. My family and I took inventory of the facts and based on what we were willing to risk, we decided to cancel and postpone our travel. That was then, and now, I find myself longing for things closer to home. There's much to be missed. On my shortlist: visiting the Strathmore to hear the BSO, sending my daughter to her beloved school, Sunday visits from my mom, birding comfortably across the region, meeting with my bird club (Frederick County chapter), and leading my after-school birds & biodiversity program (which has since gone virtual). That leads me to this virtual issue of *The Yellowthroat* which will not be available in print. The coronavirus pandemic, continues to make abundantly clear that birders must continue to adapt to the increasing use of technology, not just in the field, but as a means to stay connected. MDBirds.Org, Facebook, Google listservs, eBird, Meet, ZOOM: these are the ways in which we can be together now and later. Remember, the goal is to be physically distant, not socially disconnected. If we have the tools, we must make use of them. On that note, all calendar items can be found at MDBirds.Org.

By now, the news of a woman who weaponized her privilege against a black birder in New York's Central Park is widespread. I will not recount what I've read and seen, but urge all to read about it. For those who were astonished and surprised to hear of such an event, please know that this is not new. Birders of color face both visible and invisible restrictions when enjoying the outdoors. It is up to everyone to speak out and support birders, and others, when such instances occur. It is also up to everyone to take action to protect our shared natural spaces, which is exactly what the black birder in this situation was doing.

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Question about your mailing list preferences? Contact Maryanne Dolan at maryanne.dolan@gmail.com. Question about a calendar item? Contact Marilyn Veek at mveekmos@yahoo.com. Do you have a membership question? Contact Tom Strikwerda at webmaster@mdbirds.org.

President's Corner

Marty Chestem 1923-2016: A Generous HCBC and MOS Member Remembered

All of you probably appreciate how much MOS depends upon its members. But some members go the extra mile and yet, as the years go by, their names are forgotten. This was brought home to me recently when I enquired what uses the chapters have made of the $1500 donations from the bequest made by Martha ('Marty') Chestem and Chan Robbins, which MOS disbursed in December 2018. Several chapters replied that they had never heard of Marty and assumed the money came only from Chan's bequest. It struck me how easily the names of even our most generous members can be overlooked. So I feel that is timely for a reminder of Marty's contributions to the Howard County Bird Club and to MOS.

Marty was born in Nebraska and attended Hofstra University, New York as history major, followed by graduate studies at Denver University and George Washington University. After being an air stewardess on Braniff Airlines, Marty joined the Social Security Administration. She worked at several SSA facilities before joining the Baltimore HQ for the balance of her working years. Marty was an early resident of what was then the new town of Columbia, MD, where she lived until 2015.

Mary began her lifelong interest in birds in Texas when a colleague at work invited her on a birding trip. She started to go on field trips all over the country, arranging her business trips to include weekends and other days off to allow her to indulge in her new interest. She had soon birded in all 50 states, visiting every one of this country's prime birding locations. Marty's detailed, neatly written field notebooks bore witness to her extensive birding travels.

When the Howard County Bird Club was formed in 1972, Marty was one of its founder members (and she was to become the last active founder member in the club). In that first year Marty was the publicity chair and newsletter editor. She continued to be active in the Club for many years, becoming its president from 1983 to 1985 and was later the program chair and a Chapter member of the MOS Board. Marty was an active participant in annual counts and was interested in the club's wildflower project, as well as leading some club field trips. Marty was also active at the state level, being the convention chair for several years and MOS president from 1983 to 1985.

After her retirement in the early 1980's, Marty used the club's mounted bird specimens to give talks to garden clubs, schools and scout groups. Another of her interests was bird cartoons, of which she collected many as well creating her own cartoons on place mats for the annual club potluck.

Marty's contributions to MOS and the Howard County Club have outlasted her time with us. In her will, Marty left $17,679.93 to MOS and $36,4121,21 to the Howard Club. MOS disbursed allotments of $1500 from Marty and Chan's bequests to all the chapters (except Baltimore and Howard). These funds were to be spent however each chapter saw fit. The table below list these uses and planned uses.

Chapter	Uses of $1500 Grants from Chestem-Robbins Funds
Allegany & Garrett	Purchased 7 binoculars for local youth and for Sang Run State Park; donation for student to attend birding trip to Arizona; Garrett College activities
Ann Arundel	Donated $500 for the Phoenix Wildlife Center (rehab facility) and $1,000 for construction of a bird blind at Jug Bay.
Baltimore	No donation – considered to be adequately funded
Carroll	Sponsored attendee at E. Thompson Seton Scout Naturalist Program, Backyard Birds Workshop summer activity for children, and an art contest for youth
Cecil	Purchased 3 park benches at the new Brantwood Park
Frederick	Purchased a computer, support for YMOS Birdathon
Harford	Upgraded website
Howard	No donation – funded directly from a separate Chestem bequest
Kent	Planned contributing to an Eastern Neck NWR observation platform and for Chino Farms
Montgomery	Planned upgrade of website
Patuxent	Granted $1200 to the Piscataway Sanctuary for a foot bridge
Talbot	$1500 to build a viewing-platform
Tri-County	Three-way split: books for middle schools, support for a birding club at the local high school, and the Ward Museum
Washington	Purchase of a projector

The Howard County club has used part of Marty's bequest to fund Margaret Ackermann (author of the *Genius of Birds)* as guest a speaker, purchase of a bat meter for the Maryland Biodiversity Project, support Project Snowstorm (tracking Snowy Owls), and for the bird-proofing of the floor-to-ceiling windows at the Howard County Conservancy's Gudelsky Center.

I have borrowed extensively from Jo Solem's excellent and more comprehensive memorial to Marty, which can be found on the Howard Club's website https://howardbirds.website/otherfolders/martha-chestem-memorial.pdf.

In closing, Marty's contributions to the birds and birders of Maryland should be remembered as an inspiration for all of us.

I hope you are all staying safe and keeping up with your birding as much as these troubled times permit.

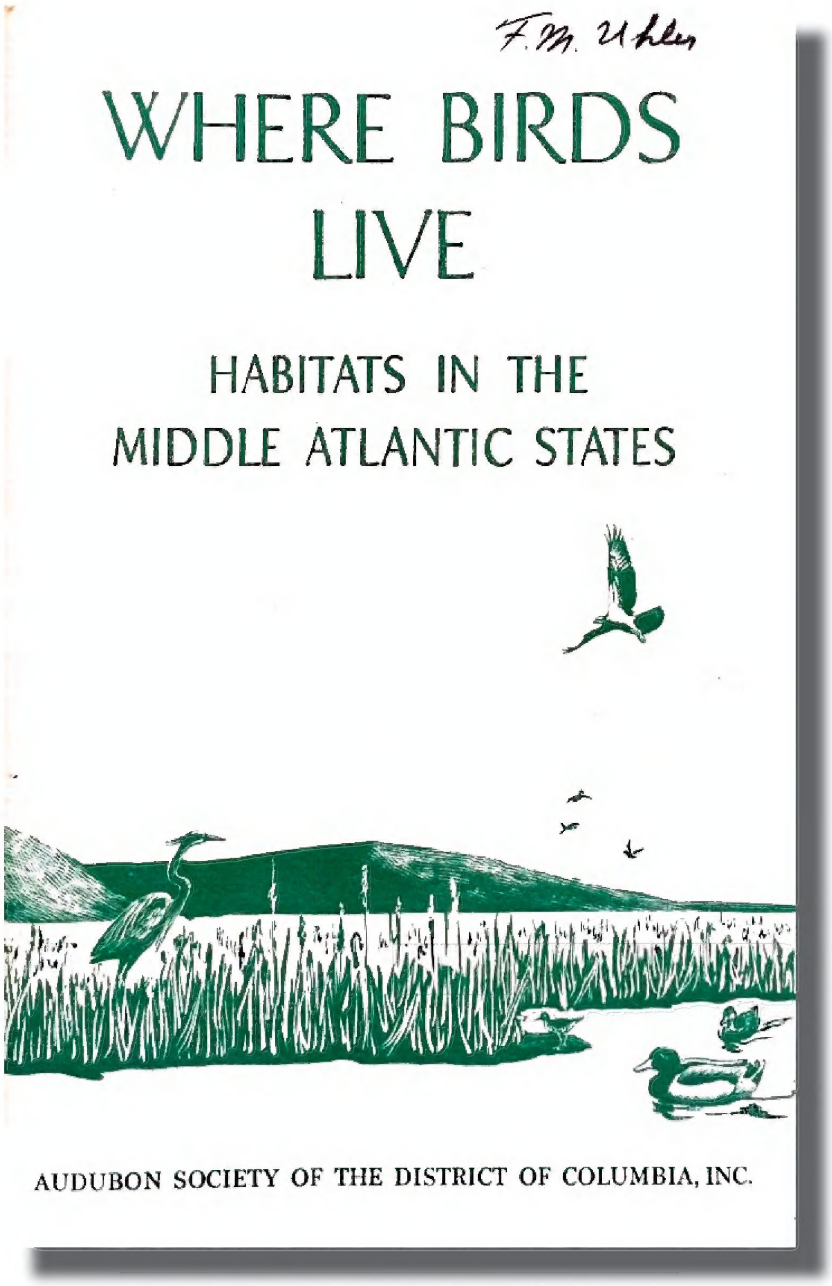
Best regards,

Robin G. Todd PhD, President MOS

Image courtesy Robert Solem

Right: 'Marty Chestem leading a bird walk in the McKeldin section of the Patapsco Valley State Park on September 11, 1976.' (Photograph by Robert Solem)

Great Horned Owl. Image Credit: Kim Tomko



New Life For a Classic Publication

MOS has been given permission by the Audubon Naturalist Society (ANS) to digitize and make available online the classic booklet *Where Birds Live: Habitats in the Middle Atlantic States*, edited by Shirley A. Briggs and Chandler S. Robbins and published by ANS in 1951. This 60-page booklet is now available as a downloadable PDF on MOS's *Birder's Guide to Maryland and DC* website (https://birdersguidemddc.org/); look for it under Resources/Habitats using the menu bar at the top right.

The booklet is long out of print and no other digitized version can be found on the web. ANS was kind enough to allow us to make their publication available. (See the historical highlight about ANS in the endnote.)

So why should we care about a publication that is 69 years old? *Where Birds Live* arguably still provides the best explanation in layman's terms of the inexorable link between birds and their habitats. If you know the habitat that is present at a particular place, then you will be able to predict the birds that can be found there; and *vice versa*, if you know what birds are present at a given location, you will know what habitat to expect. Knowing the link between birds and their habitats is part of the essential knowledge base for any serious birder, and is especially relevant now that we are in the midst of data collection for the breeding bird atlas. This is also crucial knowledge for appropriate preservation and management of land resources.

I had long been searching for a habitat reference for which we could provide a link on the *Birder's Guide* website, but those that I found weren't quite what I had in mind. Some were too technical for the average birder, some were too detailed and lengthy, some were on pay-for-use websites, and some were only available in print. I stumbled upon a citation for *Where Birds Live* while doing research

STUCK AT HOME?

Please share your backyard-bird photos & birding tales online by joining the Nature Photography DC/MD/VA Meetup. Our outings are VIRTUAL right now but we'll resume real-life hikes after the coronavirus lockdown ends. Photos (cell phone, point & shoot, and/or DSLR) of birds, critters, & plants are welcome at this Meetup, founded by MOS member, master naturalist, guidebook author, and wildlife photographer **Barbara J. Saffir.**

Nature Photography DC/MD/VA Meetup

https://www.meetup.com/Nature-Photography-DC-MD-VA/

Maryland's second sighting of a Burrowing Owl, found by Mike Charest in St. Mary's County, 2020. The first was sighted in Garrett County in 1983. Image Credit: H. David Fleischmann.

for another project, but I had never seen a copy. After determining the booklet was not available in print or online, I asked my friend Matt Perry if he had a copy in his voluminous personal library; Matt did, and readily loaned me the booklet he had inherited from Fran Uhler. I then contacted ANS to ask for their permission to digitize the booklet and make it available online, and they very kindly agreed.

The printed copy that we have digitized is itself a significant historical artifact. It was the personal property of the late Dr. Francis Uhler, a biologist at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, and the cover bears his name in his handwriting. Dr. Matthew Perry, Scientist Emeritus of Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, who was mentored by Dr. Uhler, inherited Uhler's copy of the booklet upon his death. If the name of Fran Uhler sounds familiar, you may know it from the Fran Uhler Natural Area in Prince George's County; Dr. Uhler donated the funds that allowed for the purchase and preservation of this property on the Patuxent River. Dr. Uhler, who died in 1990, was known for his research on food habits of North American wildlife and for his work on waterfowl. The Fran Uhler Natural Area entry on the *Birder's Guide* website contains additional biographical information about Dr. Uhler, as provided by Matt Perry; see https://birdersguidemddc.org/site/fran-uhler-natural-area/.

Although some of the bird species names have changed since the booklet's publication in 1951, and some birds are not as common as they once were, the essential wisdom in *Where Birds Live* remains relevant today. The booklet is organized into separate chapters for each habitat type, each written by a different author. The chapters had originally appeared as articles in the ANS journal originally called *Wood Thrush*, later renamed *The Atlantic Naturalist*.

Where Birds Live was edited by Shirley Ann Briggs (1918-2004) and Chandler S. Robbins (1918-2017). Ms. Briggs was the first editor of ANS's *Wood Thrush/The Atlantic Naturalist* and held that post for 21 years, from 1948 to 1969. She was a close friend of Rachel Carson and was, in her own right, an influential conservationist of the day. Chan Robbins, our most eminent member of MOS and an ornithologist of worldwide influence, was of course the long-time editor of *Maryland Birdlife*. Thus *Where Birds Live* was a joint project by the editors of the two ornithology journals that cover our area.

The chapters of *Where Birds Live* were written by an all-star cast that included the most prominent of local ornithologists, some professional, some amateur:

Importance of Habitat in the Lives of Birds *by John W. Aldrich*

Suburban Areas and Orchards *by Ruth Strosnider*

Woodland Margins and Hedgerows *by Irston R. Barnes*

Upland Deciduous Woods *by Irston R. Barnes*

Pine Woods *by Irston R. Barnes*

Bottomland Woods *by Irston R. Barnes*

Swamps *by Brooke Meanley*

Open Areas: Fields, Meadows and Pastures *by Eleanor C. Robbins*

Marshes *by Robert E. Stewart*

Ponds and Rivers *by Seth H. Low*

Bays and Estuaries *by Robert E. Stewart*

Tidal Flats *by Richard and Ruth Tousey*

Ocean, Ocean Beaches, Jetties and Tidal Rocks *by Edwin G. Davis*

All of the authors are now deceased. Eventually, the *Birder's Guide* website will include brief biographical notes on each; that material is too lengthy to include here. Although the authors are no longer with us, their knowledge lives on and can help us understand the kinds of places where we may find birds in present-day Maryland and Washington, D.C.

As an example of the straightforward writing to be found throughout the booklet, here's what Eleanor Robbins had to say about pastures, in the chapter "Open Areas: Fields, Meadows and Pastures:"

A pasture is a more or less completely grass-covered area on which farm animals feed . The grass species are usually some of those mentioned in the descriptions of fallow fields and meadows. A pasture is not in the sequence of succession from the fallow field to forest. The vegetation, instead of becoming more dense as time passes, becomes more sparse if the pasture is overgrazed, and many broad-leaved weeds come in.

Eleanor then describes the birds to be expected in pastures:

Since pasture vegetation is variable from one area to another, the species and densities of birds vary. The Meadowlark, Towhee, and Field Sparrow may nest on the ground. In the bushes and saplings one may find nests of the Catbird, Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, Robin, Yellow-breasted Chat, Indigo Bunting, Goldfinch, Towhee, Field and Chipping Sparrows, and rarely the Cedar Waxwing. The Cowbird often parasitizes pasture nests.

This type of information is, of course, quite useful for volunteers working on our breeding bird atlas project.

Some of the birds mentioned in *Where Birds Live*, sadly, are no longer commonly found in our area. For example, Brooke Meanley writes of Swainson's Warblers nesting in the Pocomoke Swamp on the lower Eastern Shore, but they have not been found there for decades now. In the longer term, we will be producing an annotated online version of *Where Birds Live* that will provide mouseovers with brief notes on the current status of birds that may have declined in their previous range, as well as notes with updated species names. Look for the annotated version of *Where Birds Live* on the *Birder's Guide* website later this year.

Meanwhile, we are pleased to present a PDF version that provides an exact replica of *Where Birds Live: Habitats in the Middle Atlantic States*, wavy lines of text and all. Providing the publication online is a way to preserve the knowledge of the eminent birders, scientists, and conservationists who went before us. Please log on to https://birdersguidemddc.org/ and download it today.

Endnote: At the time *Where Birds Live* was published, ANS was known as the Audubon Society of the District of Columbia, and changed its name to Audubon Naturalist Society of the Central Atlantic States in 1959. The organization currently known as the Audubon Society of the District of Columbia (DC Audubon) was not established until 1999.

Marcia Watson

YMOS News

The YMOS Birdathon: Making Lemonade

A week before the March 21 – 22 YMOS Birdathon, the group was handed a bowl of lemons as it became apparent that the COVID-19 threat was going to shut down virtually all group activities in Maryland, but the YMOS birders were not ready to throw in the towel on their annual fundraiser. It was clear that the usual group effort to locate birds throughout Maryland could not happen, but there was nothing to keep them from birding individually. The group was still able to create a wonderful weekend experience.

The basic Birdathon procedures had to change, but the students had their 100 Must-See list and were raring to go. A survey of the group and their families indicated that all were eager to participate. To add to the fun, they were joined by two former Maryland YMOS members who would also submit data from North Carolina and England. At 12:06 AM on Saturday March 21, the first species, an Eastern Screech-owl was recorded. Over the next two days, 46 Birders and family members scoured virtually every part of the State looking for their 100 Must-See species and anything else they could find. All data was recorded in eBird and shared to a central account where it was compiled and analyzed. Periodic reports were issued all weekend so that all knew what species had been found and what Must-See species still needed to be located. What normally was an exciting group event became a wonderful experience for many families.

When the dust settled Sunday at 5 PM, the students had submitted 212 eBird checklists, coded many breeding species in all parts of the State, found all but one of their Must-See Species, and recorded a total of 166 species. During the two days, the students counted over 23,000 individual birds from Garrett County to Worcester County. Particularly amusing was the fact that our one missed Must-See species, Northern Pintail, was recorded in England. The North Carolina and England birds were not included in the totals but made for interesting comparison. Only Red-breasted Nuthatch was found in North Carolina but not in Maryland. Hannes in England recorded 58 species, with 16 of those also found here, although different subspecies in some cases.

Students were able to bird closer to their homes in most cases, but the group covered a larger geographic area with data coming from Garrett County to Worcester County. The group was also joined by several of the college-age YMOS birders, who were also now home-bound. With the normal scoring rules invalid, donors were simply asked to donate what they thought was fair. As of this writing, the final donated amount is not known.

It became apparent as the news in March was deteriorating that modifying the event, rather than canceling, was important. It is important in today's crazy times to both promote a degree of normalcy wherever possible and maintain a positive approach to life. The students were able to connect digitally, planning routes, sharing known bird locations, and altering plans as the species count rose, in many ways what they do in a normal group event. All modeled safe behavior and proved to all that birding, if done safely, is something that can continue in today's difficult times. We are all so proud of them. Special thanks go out to the many families who pitched in to make that a successful weekend and to the many MOS members who pledge and donated for the event.

In the light of both last September's bird decline study and dealing with an unprecedented pandemic, all needed a positive event, and the students provided that during the Birdathon weekend. Life does go on. It is too easy with the barrage of negative news to lose sight of the fact that this crisis, like those of the past, will eventually pass, and somehow, someway we will emerge a better country.

With their normal spring trips on hold, the group is planning other activities which allow them to bird in some format without gathering as a group. Possible future activities might include a version of a Big Sit where each YMOS birder is limited to a very small geographic area and an Atlas Day where each student covers a local block for the MD/DC Breeding Bird Atlas Project, coding a many species as they can. The goal is to keep the group active and learning during this period of social distancing.

George Radcliffe, YMOS

Place Your Announcement in *The Yellowthroat*

Reach members interested in your services by placing an announcement in *The Maryland Yellowthroat*. For more information, please contact the Editor: yellowthroat@mdbirds.org

Book Review

Nature's Calendar: A Year in the Life of a Wildlife Sanctuary. Colin Rees. Johns Hopkins University Press (2019)

A Year Across Maryland: A Week-by-Week Guide to discovering Nature in the Chesapeake Region. Bryan MacKay. Johns Hopkins University Press (2013)

On the face of it, these two books from the same publisher cover ostensibly the same or very similar subject matter. In fact, the differences between them are more striking than their similarities. Rees covers a single geographical area – Jug Bay in Anne Arundel County – and he clearly deeply loves this place, describing it at all seasons of the year in terms of the plants, animals and birds that are found there. He writes with passion and skill and deep biological knowledge. He even quotes Edwin Way Teale and Gerard Manley Hopkins to equally good effect! This is a book that could be read – cover to cover – almost as an enjoyable novel, at a single sitting. It's not only a "good read" but a wonderful source of information on the flora and fauna of one of our state's most special places. Having read it I had the somewhat disquieting sensation that after 50 years of passionate pursuit of birds in Maryland, I had managed to miss, or at least to appreciate, an awful lot of the other denizens of nature.

MacKay's book, on the other hand, makes no great attempts to be elegiac about nature – something at which Rees excels. His book is nevertheless a terrific introduction to the many wonderful natural areas of the Mid-Atlantic States and to the magnificent aspects of nature that can be discovered there throughout the year. Like Rees, MacKay proceeds logically through the calendar year, week by week, highlighting a specific place and the creatures/plants/birds that can be found there. His different locations are as likely to be in one of our nearby states, like Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, West Virginia or DC, as in Maryland. If only there were a decent overall map of the mid-Atlantic region in the book, rather than the tiny little mini-maps of Maryland to help the reader see just where these special places are. Never mind, this book would be my Number 1 choice to give a person new to the mid-Atlantic, say an émigré from Europe, the Midwest or California, a tremendous jump on discovery of our region's top natural areas. It took me many years to find out about all the places MacKay describes in his book. I wish I had had access to it when I first moved to Maryland.

Michael Bowen

Montgomery Bird Club

Guess the species! Image Credit: David Horn, Eldersburg.

ANNE ARUNEL COUNTY

Pat and *Juanita Tate,* long-time members of Anne Arundel Bird Club, were recognized as Quiet Waters Park Volunteers of the Year and were honored at the Park's annual volunteer recognition ceremony on December 10, 2019. Pat & Juanita have not only led bird walks at the park for both club members and the public but also manned the AABC table at Earth Day for many years. Both have served as officers of the bird club. In addition to club volunteering, Pat conducted a 5-year study of birds seen on a segment of the BGE powerline right-of-way north of Rte 450 in Anne Arundel County. Their back yard, replete with native plants, is a haven for birds year-round, and has been a site for bird banding by the Smithsonian for years. Pat & Juanita are truly "Bird People". *Bobbi Reichwein*

Cuba

Our trip with MOS was "for the birds." It was great, and we (*Susan Zevin* and *Sharon Bradford*) recommend, all others who have the opportunity, go. Thirteen of us flew into Havana not really knowing what we would find—after all it had been 57 years since the Bay of Pigs; longer since Fidel Castro overthrew Fulgencio Batista in 1959 during the Revolution.

From the airplane we could see a verdant, lush countryside. On the ground, a mostly agrarian society of hardworking, happy people. We traveled west to the karst topography of Vinales, its caves and potholes, its lush sugar cane, and tobacco farms are home to fabulous tropical fauna. Some species that we saw include the Giant Kingbird, Cuban Tody, Red-legged Thrush, Eastern Meadowlark, Cuban Blackbirds, Antillean Swifts, Bananaquits. We had a wonderful boat-poling escape into the Zapata Swamp southeast of Havana, where the Bay of Pigs invasion came to an end. The local environments, swamp and agrarian fields were home to endemic owls, Cuban Blackbirds, and Bee Hummingbirds.

Bobbi Reichwein's advice and observations were "spot-on" helpful to us before we left. We recommend the trip highly; and will offer our own thoughts to those who might think to go in future. *Susan Zevin*

The Netherlands in Winter

Why are you going bird watching in the Netherlands at the beginning of winter? Most of the breeding birds have gone south, there are only 8 hours of daylight, and it is cold. The Netherlands is below sea level, has many conservation areas, attracts thousands of waterfowl every winter, and has good food. The real reason: I had never seen a Smew nor had I ever placed any European birds on my life list. The other reason was the trip was interspersed with visits to four art galleries which appealed to my wife. From December 1 - December 8th together with two additional days on our own, Diane and I joined Field Guides for its trip, "Holland - Birds and Art." Every aspect of the trip was incredible.

The trip began and ended in Amsterdam. From Amsterdam we drove up to the Northwest corner of the Netherlands to Texel Island for three days. Then we drove to Central Holland for two days, and finally to the Southwest coast by the North Sea for our last two days before returning to Amsterdam. Waterfowl have made the Netherlands their winter home. Within the first two days we saw eight species of geese including thousands of Barnacle Geese and one single, lone, Red-breasted Goose. The other geese covering the fields were Graylag, White-fronted, Tundra Bean Goose, Brant, Canada, and Egyptian. On our first day traveling to Texel Island we encountered a large flock of diving ducks. The trick was to locate one or two Greater Scaup out of the thousands of Tufted Ducks. Where we have many Green-winged Teal and American Wigeon, Holland's ponds produced Eurasian Teal and Eurasian Wigeon. One field appeared to be brown. Our examination revealed that it was covered by thousands of European Golden Plover. A small flock of Red-crested Pochards in full sunlight dazzled us all. We were surprised by the number of shorebirds, 18 different species -including a field of over 100 Ruff - that wintered that far north. The temperature ranged from the high 20's to the low 50's with most days well above freezing. Perhaps those temperatures and the lack of snow accounted for the lingering Flamingo and the 7 Eurasian Spoonbills. The official trip list including all the perching birds was 124 of which I saw 122.

CHAPTER CHATTER
by Jean Wheeler

Eat your heart our American bird watchers! Ever visit a blind with one of those built in, out of focus, low light telescopes? In Holland we visited a blind that was sponsored by Swarovski. This blind contained a Swarovski scope equal to or better than the individual field scopes the company retails. The scope's power and clarity enabled us to clearly see details on birds hundreds of yards away in the marsh and on the beach. Now, how can we induce Swarovski to fund our blinds?

The Netherlands' art galleries have the largest collection of Van Gogh paintings in the world. We visited the Kroller Muller museum and its collection in Hoge Veluwe National Park and the Van Gogh museum in Amsterdam. We learned how Van Gogh's brother supported him and how he painted different versions of the same subject. We saw Rembrandt's "The Night Watch" in the Rijksmuseum. The Mauritshuis Museum in the Hague featured Vermeer's "Girl with a Pearl Earring". My favorite painting in that museum was Carel Fabritius' "Goldfinch." After almost 400 years the bird was ready to fly right off its perch. A docent at the Rembrandt House in Amsterdam explained that the reason Van Gogh's colors faded while Rembrandt's colors retained their hue was because Rembrandt mixed his paints himself with the intent that they lasted "forever." Van Gogh, painting two centuries later, purchased ready made colors in tubes. The art watching in the Netherlands was just as great as the bird watching. Yes, I was able to see the Smew!! *Kenneth A. Cohen. Photo on page 12.*

CAROLINE COUNTY

Caroline County Bird Club members *Debby Bennett* and *Crystal Thomes* gave a presentation to the Caroline County Public Schools' Caroline Career and Technology Center Advanced Manufacturing Program (AMP) students on February 19 to talk about cavity dwelling birds in our area that benefit from nesting boxes, and what both birds and people look for in a nesting box.

The AMP program is a unique pathway curriculum at Caroline County Career and Technology Center, which teaches students proper manufacturing techniques, readying them for trade careers. Students present completed projects, starting with a bird nesting box and ending with a clock or guitar.

After Debby and Crystal met with the 15 students, the students went to Adkins Arboretum to learn more.

On February 27 the students all gave presentations on the design they each developed for a particular local cavity dwelling bird. Afterwards the students and the invited audience voted for the nesting box they thought was the best for the class to build.

A 10th grader, Nickolas Shirkey's design won. The students and teacher, Keith Hale will make a brief presentation to the Caroline County Bird Club at the club's April 16 meeting. *Debby Bennett.* *See the design on page 12.*

CARROLL COUNTY

SO LONG, BOB!

Well, the sad day has finally come—*Bob Ringler* has left Carroll County! I wish I could talk about all the things Bob has done for Carroll, but I've only belonged to the Club for six years, so I can barely scratch the surface. I do know that he has been many things to many people: friend, mentor, expert advisor; Club President, bird-walk leader, count coordinator/atlaser, tour guide, speaker, regular meeting participant. I myself have asked him all sorts of questions, and he has always had the patience to answer. I've watched him make sure that everyone on a walk saw the bird that was just spotted—even if they didn't know what they were looking for. I've been happy to see him at nearly every Club meeting, gotten his messages to Club members when rare birds were spotted, and heard him share stories about special birding experiences. I've even learned from him how to spot an umbrella magnolia!

Carroll has many expert birders, and our Club members are the best. Many members, like Bob, have been in the Club since the early days, and we would certainly miss the expertise and camaraderie of any to whom we had to say "good-bye." I'm trying not to think of Bob's leaving as a "good-bye" situation, though. He'll still be in Maryland, after all. He'll still be counting and atlasing and finding rare birds. He'll still be attending MOS conferences and doing great things for the birds and the birders of Maryland. I'm hoping he'll still be available to lead visitors to the Eastern Shore (like me!) on walks around his new stomping grounds. And I'm hoping that, one day, I'll look up at a Club meeting and there he'll be, even if he's only visiting. So, I just want to say to Bob, on behalf of the Carroll County Bird Club, "Good luck, good birding, and thanks for all you've done for us. We wish you the very best." And I'll say to Queen Anne's County, "Congratulations! I know *you* know you're getting one heck of a birder on your team!" *CJ McAuliffe*

CECIL COUNTY

Brazil

Macaws, monkeys and Pink Dolphins were some of the headliners when *Kim* and *Ken Drier* journeyed up the Amazon River in Brazil this past November for seven days aboard the 16 cabin Amazon Clipper out of Manaus. Arising at 5:30 each morning the group clambered into small motorized dugout canoes and ventured into the smaller tributaries and lagoons along the mighty river in search of birds, crocs and other Amazonian specialties. This was again repeated after dinner in the dark for a couple of hours to find Nightjars, and other creatures. One morning was spent fishing for Piranhas which were then used for lunch the next day in a fish soup. Scarlet, Red-bellied and Blue and Yellow Macaws along with 5 other species of parrots were observed. Kim likes colorful birds and those along with the Aracaris, Toucanets, and Toucans were just about perfect. Throw in her favorite color, pink and paint some dolphins that color and you have one happy camper.This plus one of her all time favorites, the Blue Dacnis made for a special trip. Ken particularly liked the large Boat-billed Herons that were seen mostly at night and the Sungrebes swimming along the water's edge under the over hanging trees. Hoping for a Sunbittern, Ken came up empty handed. A Red-lored Parrot though provided Ken bird number 1500 for his life list. How can you beat that? Throw in a stop or two at some native villages, sloths, a couple different species of monkeys and the giant water lilies and you have the makings of a great trip. Our accommodations on board were comfortable and the food fresh and deliciously prepared. Couldn't ask for a better time.

As we move into Spring it's time to monitor the nest boxes once again. Cecil Bird Club members *Maryanne Dolan* and *Ken Drier* step up to the plate to keep an eye on the coming and goings at both Elk Neck State Park and Woodlawn Reserve. Last year between the two sites there was a 70% success rate in the 25 boxes monitored.

Jack of all trades *Maryanne Dolan* has taken on the job of travel agent for MOS on top of her other responsibilities. Though we currently are in the mists of travel bans she has birding trips scheduled out into the summer of 2021. If you have not been on one of her adventures you owe it to yourself to give them a look. Having been on the Minnesota trip back in January and seeing 5 owl species in one day I can attest to the fact that you will get your money's work. Our group saw Snowy, Great Gray, Hawk Owl, Barred and Boreal all in one day. I defy you to do better. *Ken Drier*

HARFORD COUNTY

Upon hearing of strict recommendations to stay home and begin social distancing procedures, the Harford Bird Club jumped into action on Facebook. Beginning on March 15, a 'Social Distancing Hot Tip of the Day' was shared with members. Ideas about how to bird safely and ways to explore birds in an online platform kept people's spirits up as group events were canceled across our state.

From Wednesday, March 18 to Tuesday, March 24 the Harford Bird Club hosted a Seven Day Photography Challenge in our Facebook Group. Each day the theme of the picture shifted to a new category and our rule about only sharing Harford County birds was lifted for seven days during the challenge. Themes were: 'You're My Favorite', 'Snack Attack', 'Love & Affection', 'Blurred Lines', 'Seeing Red', 'Action, 'Black & White'. Participation was amazing and photographs from members from professional photographers to smartphone camera users were liked and appreciated. The challenge filled

MEMBER PHOTOS

Winning Design. From left to right: Debby Bennett, Caroline County Bird Club; William Condon, DART; Nickolas Shirkey, AMP student; Joe Knaggs, Knaggs Guitars; Vanice Myers, Hinkley Yachts; Jim Wilson, Adkins Arboretum bird walks provider; Keith Hale, AMP Instructor.

Red-crested Pochard. Image Credit: Ken Cohen.

Photo of Fabritius' The Goldfinch. Image Credit: Tyler Bell.

MEMBER PHOTOS

Capped Heron. Image Credit: Mike Bowen.

Eurasian Magpie. Image Credit: Tyler Bell.

MEMBER PHOTOS

Wandering Albatross. Image Credit: Gail Mackiernan.

Kagu. Image Credit: Gail Mackiernan

Little Ringed Plover. Image Credit: Steve Sheffield.

Submit Your Photos!

For more information visit:

http://mdbirds.org/publications/the-yellowthroat/

MEMBER PHOTOS

Eurasian Robin. Image Credit: Jane Kostenko.

Gray Hornbill. Image Credit: Steve Sheffield.

MEMBER PHOTOS

Spotted Owl. Image Credit: Steve Sheffield.

Protecting Killdeer at Krimgold Park.

Protecting Killdeer at Krimgold Park.

Submit Your Photos!

For more information visit:

http://mdbirds.org/publications/the-yellowthroat/

MEMBER PHOTOS

Eastern Screech Owl. Image Credit: Jo Morrison, New Windsor, Carroll County Bird Club.

Yellow-shafted Flicker. Image Credit: Jo Morrison, New Windsor, Carroll County Bird Club.

member's Facebook feeds with bird photographs, encouraged online interaction and increased awareness of our club. Our Facebook Group has now exceeded 555 individuals, seeing a 236% increase in the last three weeks. In the past month, the HBC Facebook Group has had more than 6,000 interactions (likes, posts, comments) this is a +443% increase over last month. We were honored to be able to bring some smiles and positive interaction to our Facebook Group members this month! *Amanda Subolefsky*

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Anne Cianni and Mike Bowen wrote that they spent a most enjoyable 10 days in Peru with Victor Emmanuel Nature Tours in early February 2020. The principal part of the tour was a "cruise" on the Amazon River and its tributaries near Iquitos, which is more than 200 miles from where the Amazon runs into the Atlantic in NE Brazil but where the river is already a mile wide! Anne and Mike traveled to Iquitos by plane from Lima, as Iquitos is not reachable by road from Peru or any other country. In fact, it is the largest city in the world not to be accessible by land! The week in the upper Amazon produced literally hundreds of bird species, from Parakeets to Trogons to Jacamars – most seen from small skiffs -- 12-passenger boats with twin outboard motors that could speed fast over the waves yet move slowly and silently in the many wooded creeks off the main rivers. Highlights included Trogons, Jacamars and a host of Tanagers, not forgetting a fabulous Capped Heron, which allowed us very close for photos. When birding in Iquitos before getting on our boat, the Zafiro, we came across what are apparently the first breeding Common Gallinules for this part of the world. The Amazon birding was complemented by terrific cuisine and by the talented crew, who not only knew all the local flora and fauna but had considerable musical talents as exhibited at a musical extravaganza on our last night aboard. Before flying to Iquitos, we had had a day to ourselves to bird in the City of Lima. A beautiful park in Lima's business district gave us Vermilion Flycatchers, Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet, and the interestingly named Croaking Ground-Dove, while the first day of the main trip went south to the fishing village of Pucusana and to the nearby island via small boats. Top birds there were Humboldt Penguins , lots of Cormorants of two species, Peruvian Pelicans, Peruvian Boobies, Inca Terns, and 5 different Surf Cinclodes, a Peruvian endemic species." *Mike Bowen*. *Photo on page 13.*

In December 2019, Gail Mackiernan and Barry Cooper left on a three-week cruise from Australia to several South Pacific islands including Fiji, in search of seabirds and island endemics. Gail writes, "We call this our 'One Step Ahead of Disaster' cruise because, although nothing really bad happened to us, we dodged serious problems the whole trip. First, we arrived for some pre-cruise birding in New South Wales, just in time for its massive bush fires! Several of the places we had planned to visit, such as Barren Grounds Reserve, were closed due to extreme fire danger. Some mornings we drove through thick smoke and falling ash to birding sites, even though the actual fires were miles away. The lodge we were staying at had issued emergency evacuation directions to all guests, luckily never needed. But once aboard the Holland America ship *Maasdam*, we relaxed and began to enjoy the trip. Highlights of our crossing to New Zealand were over a dozen immense Wandering Albatrosses in our wake, as well as such seabird delights as Cook's and Parkinson's Petrels, Buller's Shearwater and White-faced Storm Petrel. We had two days of land-birding in New Zealand, with skies hazy with smoke from the Australian bushfires, and then left for the island kingdom of Tonga. This is where the next near-disaster struck. The serious, fatal measles outbreak in near-by Samoa had spooked island authorities and they seemed very reluctant to let us ashore. Eventually it was worked out, and we enjoyed two days of excellent land-birding, including in-your-face views of Tongan Whistler, an endangered bird found only on two small islands. Huge feeding flocks of Black Noddies, Brown Boobies, and Little Shearwaters enlivened our evening departure.

Our next stop was to be the tiny, isolated island nation of Niue. But fate struck again, as a storm with heavy sea swells prevented the *Maasdam*'s boats from landing at the island's only small pier. (Thus losing our only chance for the rare Blue-crowned Lorikeet.). Pelagic birding however was excellent as we sailed west to Fiji, with Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Kermadec and Gray-faced Petrels among the many highlights. Fiji was our most-anticipated destination, but again, port authorities on Vanua Levu were nervous about the ship discharging passengers. Finally, only those above a certain age (assumed to have had measles) and those who could prove vaccinations were allowed ashore. Alas, so much time had been wasted that we did not have time to travel to the distant site for Orange Dove, our most-wanted bird. Another time! However, after this, things went smoothly. We had a great guide, Vili Masbalavu, lined up for our two days on Viti Levu. With his expertise, we ticked up most of the possible endemics there, including Golden Dove and Masked Shining Parrot. On now to New Caledonia! Again, we had arranged a guide, Isabelle Jollett, to take us to Parc Rivière Bleu, home of the enigmatic Kagu. Despite intermittent showers, most of the endemic birds performed well and we had great looks at Kagu, as well as Horned Parakeet, New Caledonian Goshawk and other species. Leaving the island, we enjoyed a massive feeding flock of over 500 Gould's Petrels around the outer reef - a seabird spectacular! The next two days were at sea, on our return to Sydney. Birds seen en route included the ubiquitous Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, as well as goodies such as Cook's, Black-winged and Gray-faced Petrels. We arrived in Sydney Harbour at dawn, disembarked and soon were starting our 25-hour return flight to the USA, arriving back at Dulles in the wee hours of Christmas Eve! Little did we or anyone else aboard the *Maasdam* know that on the other side of the world, a deadly virus was already spreading that would put a halt to cruises – or any travel - for the foreseeable future. Another bullet dodged!" *Chris Wright*. *Photos on page 14.*

SOUTHERN MARYLAND

Jane Kostenko and I have wanted to go to Ireland for a long time. One of Jane's sister's told us that it was on top of her bucket list and if we ever found a good deal, to loop her in. Well, the opportunity presented itself and we added her older daughter and her husband as well as our brother-in-law.

We flew from DC to Newark, New Jersey and met them before flying to Dublin. Recently, a commercial airline broke the speed record between New York (you can see it from the Newark airport)

to London, Heathrow making the trip in less than five hours! The jet stream was still in our favor and the pilot announced we had to dawdle on the taxiway so that we wouldn't arrive in Dublin before their 7 am curfew! Since Ireland is pretty far north, when we arrived shortly after 7, it was still pitch black. When we arrived at our hotel, miraculously they had rooms ready for us. We dropped our things, repacked and hit the streets. This was not a birding trip and the focus was historic but when birds present themselves, we always have a pair of binoculars along.

Fortunately, most birds in Ireland, or most of Europe for that matter, are not the same ones we see here in the states. Rock Pigeons are super abundant but House Sparrows, as common as they are here, are not that common there. Some of the more common species we encountered walking around the city were Eurasian Magpies, Wood Pigeons and Black-headed Gulls. If you're familiar with The Beatles song "Blackbird", we saw quite a few, singing though not in the dead of night. They have several common Corvid species including Common Raven (which we only saw once at Blarney Castle), Rook, Jackdaw and Hooded Crow. They are often quite tame and looking for handouts which allows some close up photographic opportunities. They have a number of thrushes that are quite similar. Redwing, Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, and Fieldfare (which we didn't see).

One bird with a similar name to our equivalent is Eurasian Robin. That's about the only thing they have in common. They are often skulkers singing in bushes or ivy driving you crazy because the song is unfamiliar and you can't figure out who is doing it. Then they pop out! We saw them wherever we went.

Also, they have chickadee equivalents as well. Blue Tit, Great Tit and Coal Tit were all seen throughout the trip though Blue Tit was certainly the most common. Another tiny terror was the Firecrest, a differently named kinglet. They look a lot like our Ruby-crowns but have a bright orange crest, sort of a hybrid between our Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets.

At one of our potty stops, Adare, there are several houses with thatched roofs. They've probably been patching their roofs for hundreds of years! Nearby, I found a thistle feeder. A brief feeder watch produced several European Goldfinches, a really fancy version of our goldfinches. Also, a couple of Lesser Redpolls were trying to get to the feeder but a Common Greenfinch was having none of that! A couple of Chaffinches were there as well giving us the chance to compare them to the similar Brambling, which we did not see. Rounding out our final day, was a Dunnock that Jane found foraging on the ground. It's an odd combination of a wren and a sparrow. Sharp looking bird! Then, at the Cliffs of Moher, we found about a dozen Meadow Pipits in a muddy field near the bus.

The crazy jet stream that pushed us east was also training large low pressure systems toward Europe. One, Storm Dennis, hit Iceland with winds over 100 mph. While we were at the cliffs, the winds were still cranking at over 60 mph! There were several rivulets that were draining over the cliffs that were actually being blown back up in a reverse waterfall. Walking into this was exciting though we were a bit concerned that some large gusts might push the bus over. Our driver was quite skilled and we never felt like this could happen.

We would definitely recommend a trip to Ireland whether it is bird related or to see amazing historic sites. And, if you're a fan of Guinness stout, the parent brewery is in Dublin nearby most of the hotels so within walking distance. They serve it in every pub. Smithwick's (pronounced Smith-ick's) is brewed in Kilkenny, another lovely medieval town where we spent a night. So, despite this being a non-birding trip, we ended up scoring eight life birds! *James Tyler Bell. Photos on pages 12, 13, & 15.*

TRI-COUNTY

Paul Bystrak and Marylee Ross attended a conference in San Diego in late February. Their room looked out on Mission Bay and afforded an opportunity to see many species of waterfowl (including Black Brant), shorebirds (included Long-billed Curlew), herons, gulls and other waterbirds. A Black Phoebe was a regular visitor to the balcony railing, and Anna's hummingbirds were common. After the conference, they drove to Twentynine Palms, stopping along the way at Morongo Canyon, the latter producing about 45 species in a couple hours of birding, including Phainopepla, Black-tailed gnatcatchers, Bewick's Wren, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Lesser Goldfinches, Red-naped Sapsucker, White-winged Doves, Verdins, Bushtits and Costa's Hummingbirds. They explored Joshua Tree NP for a couple days, along with a lot of other people since the weather was beautiful, adding Cactus Wren, Says Phoebe, Vermillion Flycatcher, and other desert and oases species. Tragically, they missed the iconic species of the desert – Roadrunner. Perhaps Wile E. Coyote finally got lucky.... *Paul Bystrak*

Bob and Marcia Balestri spent a week in Florida targeting a few new ABA birds and some known exotics. They visited several new parks for them including St. Mark's NWR near Tallahassee, Sugden Regional Park, Long Key State Park, Plantation Preserve, Fairchild Tropical Botanic Gardens, Topeekeegee Yugnee Park, and South Lake Trail where they found new ABA birds Thick-billed Vireo and Egyptian Goose, as well as a few new exotics such as Orange-winged, Red-crowned and Turquoise-fronted Parrots. They also returned to the Everglades and Merritt Island NWR for La Sagra's Flycatcher (another new ABA bird) and other Florida specialties. Total Florida trip list was 129 with 16 new Florida list birds. *Marcia Balestri*

MORE CHATTER

Thoughts on Working on the MD-DC BBA-3 in the CODIV-19 Era

Mrs Jay is desperately working on getting her new house in order as the tornado warning has the tree in my backyard rocking in the wind. Nest building, Blue Jay confirmed as a breeding bird in the block for the Maryland-DC Breeding Bird Atlas III Project (BBA-3). One down and many more to go. It was only one short month ago that the Cecil Bird Club held a special meeting featuring Gabriel Foley, Project Coordinator for the Atlas, to introduce the club membership to the endeavor. In attendance were of course Maryanne Dolan, the club President, Sean McCandless, county coordinator for the project, his fiancé Colleen Edwards and then myself. Not a very promising showing. Hopefully more individuals will take to the field to help with the grunt work needed to be done to make this a

success. Well here we are a month later dealing with CODIV-19 and all its related issues. What a great way to start BBA-3.

For the most part I go about my usual birding routines. Check the nest boxes at the Woodlawn Reserve, head over to Conowingo Park to see who the wind blew in and take a look at the ponds and lakes in my neighborhood hoping for Wood Ducks. Yet, it feels sort of different. Leaving the development the other day I spotted a pair of Bald Eagles chasing each other down the creek next to the road. I pulled over to watch and put my hazard flashers on in the car. The oncoming traffic stopped in the middle of the road half a block away and waited until I pulled out again. What was that about? The same thing happened a few days later when I saw six Hooded Mergansers in the same area. Strange way of exhibiting social distancing I thought. Compiling data in my car while in the parking lot at Woodlawn, a car will pull up and the occupants will not get out of the car until I drive off. Or, they could turn and walk the other way upon seeing me examining one of the nest boxes. Or, I pull my mask up on my face as we all do a dance around each other on the trail. All my ventures out are now alone of course. It feels kind of lonely and sad in a way. Of course many of us bird solo a good portion of the time including myself. Yet, I'm more of a social guy really. If I'm heading out into the field I may text or email a friend to see if someone wants to get out and join the fun. This is especially true this time of year as migration really begins to kick into high gear. It just feels eerie being out to me. If I stop to look at a front yard feeder at some house to confirm a Goldfinch I almost feel like a criminal. The rural roads around Cecil County are mostly deserted now. As I drive slowly on some of the more remote byways looking for birds in the mini blocks that back up to the Pennsylvania border the local Sheriff's Department turns around and follows me for a ways. I see them almost daily at any park I enter. Despite all this, when looking at the eBird portal for the Atlas I see that counties are stepping up to the plate and birds are being confirmed across the state. Fortunately all of this makes no difference to the birds who are beginning to arrive on a daily basis now. As time passes we will get ahead of the virus and slowly but surely life will return to a semblance of what we knew as normal. In the meantime it will be social distancing and trying to stay safe while out and about.The BBA-3 project is just getting underway so we have four plus years to be able to make this successful and fulfill the mission, which we will of course do. Ken Drier

India Trip

From 28 Nov – 5 Dec 2019, I was fortunate enough to attend the 6th World Owl Conference held at SP Pune University in Pune, India. Pune is in Maharashtra Province, which is the west-central part of the country, and is about 149 km (about 95 miles) SE of Mumbai. At the meeting, I presented a research paper entitled "Population declines of grassland owls in the Great Plains of North America", and served on various discussion panels during the meeting. There were about 150 attendees from 20 countries, and I had a chance to see many of my owl colleagues from previous World Owl Conferences and other scientific meetings.

As far as birding opportunities, I had a chance to do some birding with colleagues on campus during the meeting, as well as two post-conference field trips. Campus birds to highlight included gray hornbill (group of 3 just showed up in the area for winter), common myna, black kite, forest wagtail, purple sunbird, magpie-robin, white-throated kingfisher, black and ashy drongos, rose-ringed parakeet, Mahratta woodpecker, Tickell's flycatcher, dusky crag martin, and coucal.

The day following the meeting, conference participants were involved with the annual Indian Owl Festival held at the ELA Foundation headquarters in Pingori, India, which is 66.3 km southeast of Pune. This festival celebrated owls in science and society, and involved many local teachers and their classes of students, student owl artwork and dancing, and owl education programs. The TV stations and regional newspapers were there to cover the festivities, and I was interviewed by one of the TV stations. While waiting for the festival to start, we of course got in some birding, which included 3 species of eagles (Bonelli's, short-toed snake, and tawny), green bee-eater, red-vented bulbul, common and white-throated kingfishers, striated heron, red-wattled lapwing, purple sunbird, red-rumped swallow, black drongo, cattle egret, large gray babbler, braminy starling, house crow, long-tailed shrike, common rosefinch, black stork, shikra, little brown dove, dusky crag martin, gray francolin, house sparrow, and Indian peafowl.

Following the Owl Festival, in the afternoon, we went searching for two of the area's specialty owl species, the spotted owlet and mottled wood owl, which is an endemic. In the small town of Morgaon (66.7 km SE of Pune), in the middle of nowhere, we made a stop at an abandoned factory and found in one large tree a large flock of rose-ringed parakeets and one spotted owlet. The spotted owlet flew to a nearby tree, but was cooperative enough for me to get some nice photos of it. Just down the road from here, we visited a large old religious temple (Moreshwar Temple) surrounded by trees, and walked around back to see two mottled wood owls flying away from us (very skittish!). Also seen at this location were gray hornbill, river tern, black drongo, house crow, rose-ringed parakeet, red-naped ibis, Indian pond heron, shikra, and black-winged kite.

Still in the Morgaon area, we stopped in a large, remote grassy area, which we were told by our guide was good habitat for the Indian gray wolf. Birds seen here included short-toed snake eagle, rosy starlings, black and racket-tailed drongos, spotbill, pallid harrier, greater short-tailed lark, and barn swallows. On the way out, we saw a small herd of Indian gazelles.

The following day, we again drove SE out of Pune (about 105 km) to the prime wetland birding area of Bhigwan, which was a very large reservoir. Our group was taken out in boats to find as many birds as we could in about 3 hrs. There was an incredible abundance of waterfowl, wading birds, gulls and terns, and shorebirds, as well as raptors. Waterfowl included ruddy shelduck, bar-headed goose, spot-billed duck, N shoveler, and Eurasian coot. Waders included black-headed and glossy ibises, painted, woolly-necked, and Asian open-billed storks, gray heron, Indian pond heron, and little, great and cattle egrets. Shorebirds included little ringed plover, black-winged stilt, red-wattled lapwing, common and wood sandpipers, brown godwit, common redshank, and little stint. Gulls and terns

included brown-headed, black-headed, and Pallas's gull, and river, common, and whiskered terns. Raptors included spotted eagle, black kite, marsh harrier, and two species I've seen before (but not in India) – osprey and peregrine falcon. Other bird species seen here included Indian shag, baya weaver, black drongo, jungle crow, green bee-eater, house sparrow, Blyth's reed warbler, yellow wagtail, purple and crimson sunbirds, pied bushchat and Eurasian collared dove, and common kingfisher.

That evening, my last in India, we returned back to campus just before dusk to climb up to a roof of a dormatory to view the Indian flying foxes (*Pteropus giganteus*). This species is highly revered in India, and I was fortunate enough to get to count 54 of them coming in at dusk to roost in the large fruit trees on campus. The amazing trip ended with some colleagues at the Mumbai airport where we enjoyed one last pint of kingfisher beer for the road – fitting for such an avian-rich country as India. *Steve Sheffield, PhD. Photos pages 14, 15, & 16.*

Return to Southwest Florida

During January 22 - 27, 2020 we traveled to southwest Florida to visit three birding areas in or near Fort Myers - the Ding Darling NWR, Lakes County Park and the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. Lakes County Park was new for us, and we hadn't been to Ding Darling and Corkscrew for twenty years. The weather was generally good (almost no rain) and the birding was terrific.

After our nonstop flight from Baltimore landed in Fort Myers in late morning, we hopped into a rental car and headed for Sanibel Island and lunch. Then we spent the afternoon on the Wildlife Drive in the Ding Darling NWR. There were plenty of Blue-winged Teal, Pied-billed Grebes, Anhingas, White Pelicans, four varieties of herons, three varieties of egrets, White Ibis and Roseate Spoonbills. The next day we made three more circuits on the Wildlife Drive, took some photos, and found a White-eyed Vireo on the Shell Mound Trail. During our circuits it seemed to us that the number of cars on the Drive has visibly increased since 1999, and the number of bicycles has greatly increased.

On Day 3 we walked on some of the Trails on the Bailey Tract portion of the refuge and found Palm and Yellow-rumped Warblers, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, a Flicker, some White Ibis, and some common birds. After lunch we visited Lakes County Park in Fort Myers and walked on the Boardwalk. This was some of the best birding of the trip - Limpkin, Short-tailed Hawk, a close Tricolored Heron, Common Gallinules, Anhingas, and Great Blue and Little Blue Herons. The Pranty/ABA Guide (2005) describes the Short-tailed Hawk as "Rare to Locally Uncommon" in Florida.

On Days 4 and 5 we spent the morning on the Boardwalk at the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. The highlight was a Hammond's Flycatcher (a western bird) quietly perched close to the Boardwalk. A Sanctuary staff person was helping birders to locate it. An ABA Rare Bird Alert stated that it is only the 3rd record for Florida. Other highlights for Corkscrew included Painted Buntings at the feeders, Black-crowned Night Herons, Purple Gallinules and five Warbler species (Palm, Pine, Black-and-White, Common Yellowthroat and Yellow-rumped).

We hope to return in 2021 and start exploring areas southeast of Naples. Jim Highsaw and Linda Prentice

Killdeer at Krimgold Park

Back in late March, members Kris Phillips and her husband JP Miller visited Krimgold Park, a small but fairly popular county park in Woodbine. As they walked near the upper pond, they noticed 2 killdeer, apparently disturbed by all the people—walkers, runners, dogwalkers--going by. The birds were making quite a ruckus! Several days later, Kris and JP went back to the park to check on the birds. Since all was quiet, they assumed that the killdeer had decided the traffic was too heavy and left the area. Not so! All of a sudden, one bird started making noises and displaying right in front of them, hoping to scare them away from her nest, which was perilously close to the path. Naturally, our birders retreated quickly, but they were able to get a quick photo of the killdeer, sitting on 4 eggs in its nest.

As Kris and JP left the area, they became concerned that park visitors (or their dogs), unaware that the killdeer were there, might inadvertently disturb them or, worse, step on the eggs. After notifying the Friends of Krimgold Park and contacting our Club for advice, they decided to take action: they created and displayed 3 signs around the nest area, far enough away that walkers could pass by the area without disturbing the nest. Would it work? It certainly seemed to. Kris reports that it was heartwarming to watch people approach a sign, read it, and then give the area a wide berth—and get their dogs back on leash! She said that often, as they were watching the nest through their binoculars, people would walk over and ask them about the killdeer, genuinely interested and excited to learn about some of their habits.

The best part of the story is, of course, that the nest was successful! How many of the four eggs hatched and babies fledged we don't know, but Mom and Dad and at least one chick—possibly two—were seen just a few days ago at a small mud pond near the now-vacant nest. Carroll County is happy to have new additions to its shorebird population and another (very early) "confirmed" entry for the Breeding Bird Atlas. We thank Kris and JP for taking such prompt and effective action to help the killdeer. We are proud to say that they have joined the many other members in the Club who care about birds and do what they can to protect them. Photos page 16.

California Trip

Last September, my wife (Barbara), daughter (Lisa), and a friend took a one week trip to California to combine some birding plus a mini family re-union. The trip began by flying to Vancouver, British Columbia where we boarded a Princess Cruise for a 3 day cruise to Los Angeles. Naturescape Tours out of Minnesota has been offering these tours in the spring and fall as a way to pick up some pelagic birds as well as enjoy the amenities of a fully outfitted cruise ship. This is a particularly good plan since non-birders (we had 2) have plenty of activities to enjoy while others in our group spent our two days scanning the ocean for pelagics.

Lisa and I had never taken a pelagic trip off the West coast, so petty much anything we saw was going to be a lifer for us. The weather

actually turned out to be too calm for our purposes. Seabirds like to have at least moderate swells to stir up food sources and our weather was just to smooth. We were told that the birding on our trip was rather slow, but we enjoyed ourselves and picked up 7 lifers during the 2 day trip down the coast. The trip total was 30 species. I believe on a "good" cruise the trip list would number 40+.

Our lifers were South Polar Skua, Rhinoceros Auklet, Black-footed Albatross, Buller's Shearwater, Pink-footed Shearwater, Black-vented Shearwater, and Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel. The biggest "miss" for the cruise was Laysan Albatross, which is seen on most trips.

Our non-birders enjoyed the calm seas and found many things to do while the birders spent all their time on deck. The large cruise ship provided a very stable platform for scanning the ocean. Our guide had a spotting scope set up all the time, but we found binoculars did an excellent job by themselves.

Upon arriving in Los Angeles, we rented a car and drove a short distance up the coast to the delightful town of Solvang, CA. There we had arranged for a local guide to take Lisa and I out for a full day of birding the next day. Wes met us at 5:30 am and off we went. Wes has been leading groups for many years and really knew where to find the birds – he was exceptional! Our target birds were California Condor, LeConte's Thrasher, White-headed Woodpecker, and Hermit Warbler. We covered about 300 miles in 12 hours and got ALL of our target species plus 88 others! What a great day! Wes said that if we had had just a bit more time to include some coastal stops, we could have easily seen close to 120 species. Wow – that's exhausting just thinking about it.

After our 1-day stop in Solvang, we drove on up the coast to Monterey where we joined other members of our family for our mini-reunion. All in all on the trip I added 11 life birds as well as 33 birds to my California list bring that total up to 208.

Great food, wonderful birds, excellent guides, a short cruise, interesting habitats (on land), several really nice cities/towns, and a family gathering to top it off. Can't do much better than that in 1 short week!

Duvall Sollers, Hereford, MD

Outdoor Bird Painting

Missing your regular Spring outings in peak birding time? As we pay closer attention to what's in our own backyard, rainy April days may occasionally deny us even that pleasure. Consider one solution that teenager Mariska Lebamoff provided to ensure someone can view birds every day. As an "artist-in-residence" for the owner of the house where she stayed recently in Arlington, Virginia, Mariska received her first ever commission to paint his garden shed featuring native birds.

After living in New Zealand for the past 8 years, Mariska returned to the U.S. to prepare for university here just before Covid-19 hit the area. When her SAT exams and college tours were cancelled, she was eager to occupy her time productively, and was thrilled to have an opportunity to apply her artistic talents to a meaningful project. Luckily, her twin brother, Jared, offered his assistance for some of the background preparation.

Fortunately, the shed is in a side yard facing a cul-de-sac, so neighbors and residents out for a stroll can enjoy this view. Some even thought the inviting small side yard with a patio was a public space! *Susan Jenson. Images below.*

Submit Your Photos!

For more information visit:

http://mdbirds.org/publications/the-yellowthroat/

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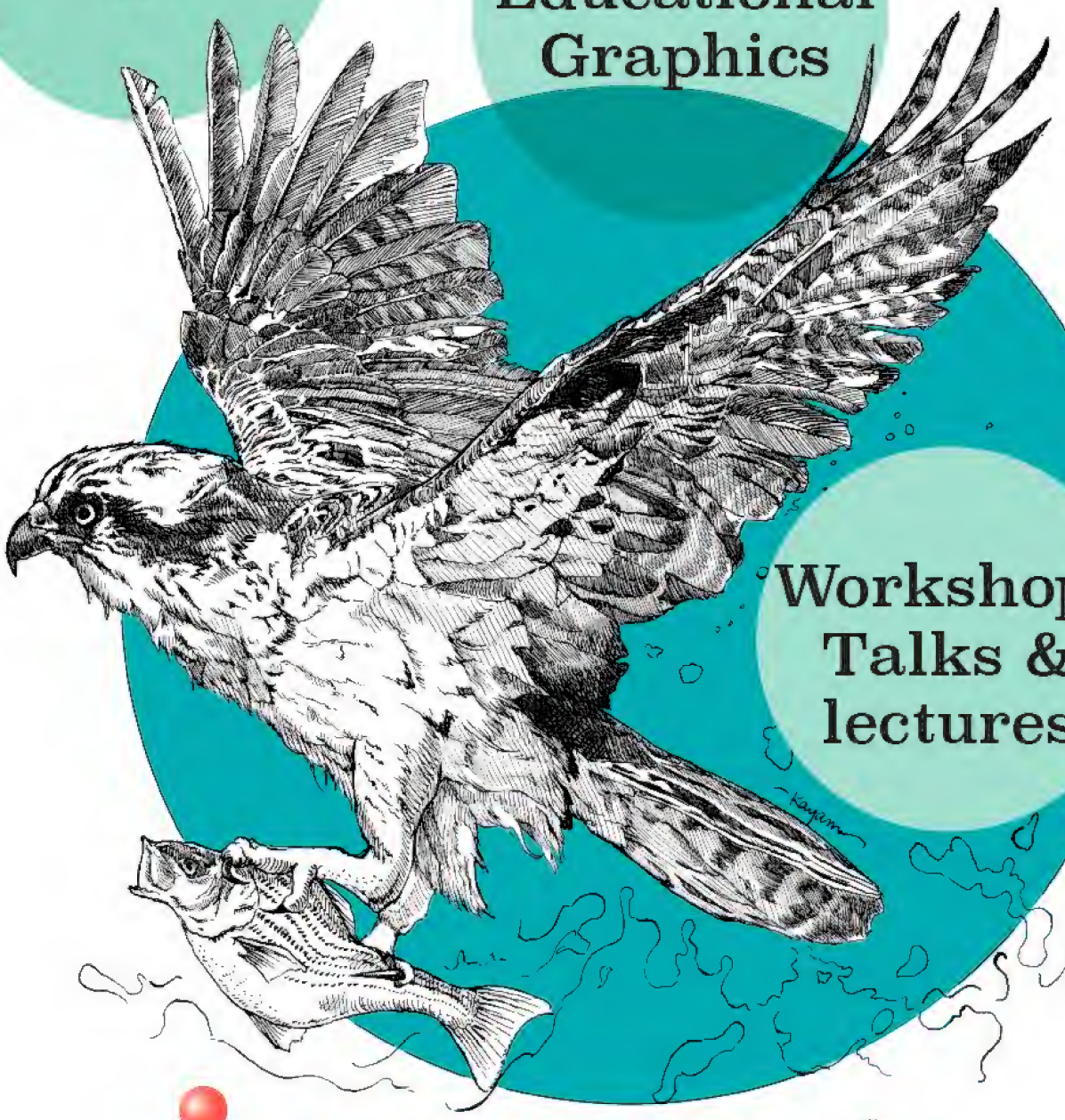

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Meet Eugene Scarpulla

When Chandler Robbins handed full editorship of *Maryland Birdlife* to Eugene Scarpulla beginning with the Spring 2015 issue, Gene's first lead article was Don Messersmith's comprehensive and affectionate review of Chan's life and career. The choice typified Gene's propensity for acknowledging others. When I approached Gene about writing this profile piece about him, he asked, "Are you sure you don't want to write about someone more worthy?" and then listed the names of eight other MOS members.

Gene's openness to learning and to his teachers and mentors has built a life with myriad interests and expertise. Ask him about gulls and shorebirds, native bees, field biology, citizen science, restaurant management, bartending, scientific writing, and music (notably jazz, doo-wop, R&B, blues, Motown, classic rock, and traditional country)—you'll be impressed by his range.

Born and raised in Towson, Maryland, Gene honed his love for wild things around a creek near his childhood home, catching minnows and tadpoles and watching birds and insects. Upon completing a Bachelor's degree in biology at Towson State College, his National Guard service sent him to Texas to train as a medical laboratory technician. Back in Maryland, Gene was hired as a biologist at the City of Baltimore's reservoir watersheds (Loch Raven, Prettyboy, and Liberty). There, he spent his days either boating on a Boston Whaler or wearing hip boots in streams collecting invertebrates and water samples.

Then, Gene detoured to the service industry. Armed with an Associate of Arts degree in restaurant and club management, he was a bartender and night manager at Johnny Unitas and Bobby Boyd's Baby Doe Mining Company restaurant in Towson. From there, Gene became general manager of the Electric Circus, an Ocean City nightclub that featured disco the first year and transitioned to live rock bands the second. Then, on to managing Pembroke's, a restaurant in Bel Air, where he took great pleasure in organizing live music and disc jockeying his beloved music from the late '50s and early '60s. When working 80- to 100-hour weeks got old, Gene returned to biology, resuming his career with the City of Baltimore and obtaining a Master's degree from Towson State University in 1985. For 30 years, Gene managed over 25,000 acres of the reservoir watersheds, overseeing water quality, wildlife, fisheries, forestry, land management, and recreation.

Gene maintained his connection with Towson University as a guest lecturer on environmental conservation and aquatic biology, and leading field trips on ornithology and limnology. In 1990, he developed a part-time business, "Atlantic Seabirds", running Ocean City pelagic birding trips for two years. He served the American Birding Association for seven years as its Maryland membership coordinator and as a field trip leader. He also served for three years as co-editor of the Middle Atlantic Coast Region in the publication *American Birds*.

With retirement, Gene embraced even more volunteer work. In 2014, he applied his experience to edit *Maryland Birdlife,* MOS's long-running journal of bird science and observation. His new interests included a romance with fellow scientist and birder Marcia Watson (profiled in *The Maryland Yellowthroat* Vol. 40, No. 1). Gene and Marcia announced their engagement at the 2017 MOS Conference and married later that year. They live in Bowie, Maryland.

Gene continues to serve MOS with his conscientious curation of *Maryland Birdlife*, chapter presentations, and field trips. MOS and Maryland's natural science community greatly benefit from Gene Scarpulla's curiosity, capability, and can-do attitude.

How did you first cultivate a special interest in birds?

I was interested in all aspects of nature since a young child. In my junior year of college, I needed another 4-credit biology elective to fill my schedule. The only course that fit my schedule was Ornithology taught by Compton Crook. I was hesitant to take the course, having visions of Nancy Kulp as "Jane Hathaway" and Wally Cox as "Professor P. Caspar Biddle" on *The Beverly Hillbillies* running around in pith helmets, safari jackets, and knee-highs, with binoculars dangling from their necks. Regardless, I took the course and loved it. Compton was an excellent field birder (and science fiction writer under the name Stephen Tall). One of the first birds that I observed was an Indigo Bunting and I was gobsmacked that a bird could be so brightly colored. As part of the course, I did a two-week banding project in "The Glen" under the tutelage of Doug Hackman, another excellent birder.

Years later, after graduate school, I wanted to return to birding and signed up for Rick Blom's continuing education birding course at The Johns Hopkins University. This became the start of our close friendship over many years. On one of the course's field trips, Rick took us to Conowingo Dam and told the class how wonderful it is to come back here in the winter from sunrise to sunset and observe the 50,000–80,000 gulls swirling around and to look for rarities. At the time, I thought the man was nuts, but little did I know that I would become an obsessive "larophile," spending every winter weekend from sunrise to sunset with Rick at Conowingo searching for rare gulls. I owe my gull, tern, and shorebird skills to Rick and to Claudia Wilds.

In March of 1990, early in your serious birding career, you spotted a mega-rarity in Maryland. Tell us the story!

After taking Rick Blom's course, I began weekly trips in March to the Back River Wastewater Treatment Plant to look for Little Gulls and Black-headed Gulls, neither of which I had ever observed before. On one of the trips, I noticed a petite gull with a petite bill mixed in with the Bonaparte's Gulls in one of the settling tanks. When it flew, I noticed the pale wings and wedge-shaped tail. In my mind, I was thinking this must be a Little Gull. I got out my field guide, opened it, and exclaimed, "Holy $#@&, it's a Ross's Gull!" I finally reached Rick after midnight and he said he would make a few phone calls and meet me at the plant the next morning. When I arrived at the plant the next morning, Rick met me at the front gate and said, "It's here!" He also said that he had put my reputation (of which I had none) and his reputation (which was immense) on the line by calling all the people after midnight the night before. The entire Maryland/DC Records Committee was there that morning to see the Ross's Gull! This was where I first met Chan Robbins and Claudia Wilds. All of a sudden, I became a celebrity in the newspapers and on radio and television. The gull stayed around for about a month, and afterwards, things returned to normal (or so I thought!). I wanted to go to an American Birding Association conference in Colorado, so I called to register. I was told the conference was already at capacity but they would take my name for the waiting list. I gave them my name and they said "You found the Ross's Gull; we'll make room for you." When I got to the conference, I was in the field on one of the field trips and I hear people whispering behind me, "That's Gene Scarpulla; he found the Ross's Gull." A year or two later, I spent a week birding in Monterey, California. I met an old high school friend who was interested in going owling with me. The day after we went owling, she went to work and told one of her friends where she had been the night before. Her friend exclaimed, "You went owling with Gene Scarpulla! He's famous! He found the Ross's Gull!" Unbelievable how one small bird could so influence one's life!

Image: Scarpulla with Barn Owls at a program.

Note: for a detailed account of Gene's Ross's Gull discovery, see ***Maryland Birdlife 1991, Volume 47, Number 2, Pages 31-37. https://sora.unm.edu/node/132886***

Could you talk about your work on Hart-Miller Island?

I began conducting weekly bird surveys on Hart-Miller Island in May 1996 with my best birding friend Rick Blom. I continued the weekly surveys over most of the years through 2008. In the early 2000s, drought conditions left almost no mudflats on the island for observing shorebirds, so I added butterflies to the surveys, and then dragonflies, and eventually added damselflies, beetles, moths, other invertebrates, fish, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals. In 2009, Sam Droege convinced me to do a yearlong native bee survey of the island. I found 86 species. I have been associated with Sam at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center's Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab ever since. In 2015, I did a yearlong cooperative bee survey with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on Poplar Island, finding 94 species.

Image: Scarpulla at the Bee Inventory and Monitoring lab.

And that work led you to edit the journal of the Maryland Entomological Society?

I gave a presentation on my Hart-Miller Island insect surveys to the Maryland Entomological Society (MES). The president of MES suggested that I write an article about my surveys for their journal, *The Maryland Entomologist*. It turned out there was no current editor and the journal had been on hiatus for a few years. I asked some of the other Hart-Miller Island insect aficionados to write additional articles and I became the de facto journal editor in 2008, and have continued as editor ever since.

You've put tremendous effort into *Maryland Birdlife*. Tell us about the joys, the challenges and your goals for the journal.

When Chan Robbins was retiring as editor of *Maryland Birdlife*, I was asked if I might be interested in serving in the position. I said I would be interested but that I wanted the journal to focus on informational bird articles, as opposed to meeting summaries, and I wanted the journal printed on glossy paper with color photos. The MOS officers and board supported my recommendations and I became editor. It has been a pleasure working with Associate Editor Mark Johnson who serves as the liaison with the peer reviewers. I also greatly enjoy interacting with all of the authors who come from such varied backgrounds. Probably, my biggest challenge is receiving enough articles for each issue. There is no backlog of articles "in the barn" waiting to be published. Pretty much, what comes in is published in the next issue. I would love to build up a small surplus of articles. My current goals are to continue publishing two issues per year and to continue archiving the issues on SORA (Searchable Ornithological Research Archive) and BHL (Biodiversity Heritage Library).

Awards

Although the 2020 MOS convention had to be postponed, our Awards Committee, led by Joy Aso, has prepared the awards for this year's honorees. Although the awards are announced below, formal presentations will not be made until the 2021 convention in Cumberland.

MASTER CONSERVATOR AWARD

presented to

DOMINIC NUCIFORA

in grateful appreciation for devoting and dedicating your time, energy, and creativity to care for and oversee our treasured Sanctuaries

May 16, 2020

The Maryland Ornithological Society

Background: Dominic has led the MOS *Sanctuary* Committee with energy and creativity. Upon taking office, he created attractive and informative web pages for each sanctuary, including aerial photos taken by drone. He organized and led work weekends at the Irish Grove, Mill Creek and Carey Run sanctuaries, chaired committee meetings, prepared reports, and managed the donations by the Robbins' family, of the Red Run Sanctuary, and by Beverly DuBose III, of additional acreage to Irish Grove, and the purchase of an inholding at the latter sanctuary. Space does not permit a full accounting of Dominic's achievements. Suffice to say that he has been an indefatigable and inspiring advocate for our sanctuaries.

The Maryland Ornithological Society

presents the

Valued Service Award

to

Marcia Watson

with deep appreciation for completing the "Birder's Guide to Maryland and DC." It was through your determination, dedication, and perseverance that the Guide has become such an invaluable on-line resource.

Background: Marcia's completion of the Birder's Guide to Maryland and DC is really valuable achievement. This comprehensive and accessible website describes all 185 noted birding sites in Maryland and the District of Columbia. Begun in 2015 by Marcia and others, the initial idea was to produce a birding guide in the form of a traditional, hardcopy booklet. But life circumstances got in the way and Marcia passed the baton over to Joan Cwi a couple of years later. The committee saw the need for it to be an online resource and proceeded to implement this vision with the help of JB Churchill. The site compilation was largely done in 2017, when life circumstances necessitated that Joan pass the baton back to Marcia, who re-checked and updated the details of each site and compiled missing sites. After two malware attacks, which prompted the re-inputting of a lot of content, Marcia realized that the Guide website should be moved to a more advanced and stable platform. She chose WordPress and then worked with Gabe Seiden of 4Connect4 and Tom Strikwerda of MOS to rebuild the website on this new platform. Thanks to Marcia's artistry and tenacity, we now have one of the best online birding sites in the country.

The Maryland Ornithological Society

presents the

Certificate of Appreciation

to

Dave Bridge

for recognizing the importance and significance of the
MOS nest cards and for diligently working to ensure their
preservation and availability for posterity.

The Maryland Ornithological Society

presents the

Certificate of Appreciation

to

Phil Davis

for your dedication and foresight to preserve and conserve the
MOS nest cards. You successfully ensured their preservation and availability for posterity.

Distinguished Service Award:

The Maryland Ornithological Society

presents the

Distinguished Service Award

to

Marilyn Veek

in deep gratitude for your devotion and dedication as the
May Count Coordinator and for skillfully and accurately compiling the
Calendar for The Maryland Yellowthroat.

The Maryland Ornithological Society

awards the

Unsung Hero Award

to

George Alderson

in appreciation for countless hours of tirelessly writing letters on behalf of the MOS in support of birds. Your letters are thoughtful and effective in the fight to save and conserve birds and their habitat.

Background: George Alderson has drafted many letters on behalf of the Society to federal and state agencies and other entities in support bird conservation, or in rebuttal to proposed legislation or rule makings which would be adverse to birds. For over 15 years, his careful attention to detail and familiarity with the federal way of thinking have been invaluable in producing authoritative, credible communications to government entities. These documents are then officially transmitted to their recipients by the Conservation Committee Chair or by the President, leaving George's vital role apparent only to MOS insiders. It is therefore high time that his vital role was recognized more widely.

The Maryland Ornithological Society

declares that

Kim & Kimberley McEligot

are treasured

Friends of the Society

For graciously hosting Maryland's first recorded Black-chinned Hummingbird, January 18 – February 22, 2020, and for welcoming many visitors.

The Maryland Ornithological Society
presents the
Certificate of Appreciation
to
Jane Kostenko & Tyler Bell
for graciously donating your time to assist, support, and escort the
many visitors to observe Maryland's first recorded
Black-chinned Hummingbird, January 18-February 22, 2020

The Maryland Ornithological Society
presents the winner
Ikumi Kayama
Winner of the
2020 MOS Pin Design Contest

The Maryland Ornithological Society
thanks
(John Ford, Ellen Lindenbaum, Dorothy Mumford, and Virginia B. Reynolds)
for
50 Years of Membership
Your dedicated support has been invaluable to the
growth and accomplishments of the Society.
The Society hereby grants you an Honorary Life Membership.

My congratulations to all!
Robin G. Todd, President MOS